

# “All The Pretty Horses”



## OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of horses to both military and Indian participants at the Washita.
- To analyze the ordered destruction of the Cheyenne pony herd
- To examine the relationship between the horse remains, settlement, and modern science.

“By actual count we had in our possession eight hundred and seventy captured ponies, so wild and unused to white men that it was difficult to herd them. What we were to do with them was puzzling as they could not have been led had we been possessed of the means of doing this... And even if we could take them with us... it was anything but wise or desirable on our part to do so as such a large herd of ponies, constituting so much wealth in the eyes of the Indians, would have been too tempting a prize to the warriors...and to effect their recapture they would have followed and waylaid us day and night...” “Impelled by these motives, I decided neither to attempt to take the ponies with us nor to abandon them to the Indians, but to adopt the only measure left – to kill them. To accomplish this seemingly – like most measures of war – cruel but necessary act, four companies of cavalrymen were detailed dismounted, as a firing party.” George A. Custer, “My Life on the Plains”



“The wounded ponies passed near our hiding place, and would moan loudly, just like human beings....The Indian ponies that were left were driven towards the bottoms. Some horses would run back, and the soldiers would chase them, and head them the other way.”

Moving Behind, a Cheyenne, “Some Reminiscences...” 1937

“In the herd were some government horses and mules, which had probably been run off from some fort...Each commissioned officer was allowed two ponies out of the herd...After picking what stock we needed, four or five companies surrounded the herd, and shot all the animals. It was hard, but there was nothing else to do under the circumstances.” Sergeant John Ryan, 1909

“Eight hundred ponies are to be put to death...Now commences the slaughter...Volley and volley is poured into them by too hasty men, and they, limping, get away only to meet death from a surer hand.” Captain Frederick Benteen, Dec. 22, 1868

“All of our horses were killed south of our village...We had a great herd of fine spotted horses. The white soldiers kill all of them except the few of the prettiest ones which they take for themselves. Lone Wolf, a Cheyenne, “Soul of the Red Man”1937

**Based on information from the tour/program and school lessons, imagine that you are a horse – either an Indian pony or cavalry mount. Write a paragraph describing the attack and what you, as a horse, saw and felt the morning of November 27, 1868:**

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“The Cheyenne terms for those who treat horses are *moi’nu-enu’itan*, horse doctor (man), and *moi’nu-enu’itane*, horse doctor (woman)...A story is told of an old-time horse doctor, who when engaged in his practice, would spit horse-dung from his mouth; a colt’s hoof sometimes came part way out of his mouth and then drew back. He was named *Manhik’* (Golden Eagle Bone)...In 1862 there was a very old horse doctor named Gland, who said he possessed the original medicine which had been give him by *Manhik’*. When he wished his horse to come, he did not call out loud, but simply held up his medicine bag and sang.” **George B. Grinnell, “The Cheyenne Indians”**

**There were many types of horses at the Washita, some were riding horses, some were pack animals, others were valuable hunting and war horses. There were weanlings, yearlings, colts and fillies, mares, geldings, stallions, and mules.**

“I have been quite busy coloring the company horses. Don’t imagine that I have been painting them; but I have been classifying all the horses of the regiment, so that instead of each company representing all the colors of the rainbow...now every company has one color.” **George A. Custer, Nov. 3, 1868**

In the following puzzle, identify and circle the following horse & mule parts, breeds, colors, and types:

**Appaloosa, Bay, Chestnut, Colt, Coronet, Dun, Fetlock, Filly, Foal, Gaskin, Gelding, Herd, Hoof, Mane, Mare, Morgan, Mule, Palomino, Piebald, Pinto, Pony, Roan, Sorrel, Stallion, Stifle, Swayback**

M	A	R	E	D	S	P	X	M	O	R	G	A	N
F	P	I	N	T	O	A	U	B	E	V	D	R	A
E	K	J	R	B	R	L	M	W	J	T	I	O	I
T	M	A	N	E	R	O	S	W	R	H	F	A	L
L	P	Q	Q	R	E	M	G	E	L	D	I	N	G
O	O	F	O	A	L	I	A	M	I	T	L	S	C
C	N	W	D	L	H	N	S	U	O	E	L	Y	O
K	Y	A	U	C	C	O	K	L	G	B	Y	Y	R
T	W	U	N	O	X	P	I	E	B	A	L	D	O
S	T	I	F	L	E	F	N	C	W	Y	P	I	N
H	H	D	Y	T	S	W	A	Y	B	A	C	K	E
O	H	E	R	D	X	C	H	E	S	T	N	U	T
O	S	T	A	L	L	I	O	N	P	L	H	T	J
F	U	A	P	P	A	L	O	O	S	A	T	Q	Q

## Why aren’t the horse bones still here?

“Before us,...for a distance of several hundred yards, were bones of every description. Skulls, legs, vertebrae, every kind of bone known to a horse was present...proof that there...lay the equine victims of Custer...” **H. Van Zandt “The Battle of the Washita, Revisited,” 1933**

“Frank Turner said long after he had staked his claim north of the battlefield he watched freighters load bones of these animals into huge wagons to be taken to Texas and sold for fertilizer.” **“The Daily Oklahoman,” Nov. 23, 1930**

“In the first half of the twentieth century the economic pressures of the Great Depression forced...local residents to harvest the bones to sell to a fertilizer manufacturer... (also) The erosional effects of flooding...took their toll, scouring the floodplain and washing everything downstream.” **Archeological Survey at Washita Battlefield, 2002**

“Collectors continued to remove material remains of the 1868 engagement, including the faunal-bone remains of the horse slaughter event...” “Today, ...the effects of contemporary artifact collecting [continues] to alter the locality...” **Archeological Survey at Washita Battlefield, 2002**

Use a dictionary to help identify the following terms:

- Artifact \_\_\_\_\_
- Faunal \_\_\_\_\_

**In an attempt to find the horse kill site, scientists have scoured the earth along the Washita river, looking for chemical evidence in the soil – auguring the earth in hopes of uncovering information.**

“Even if all bones were removed, their chemical signature – calcium phosphate – should be identifiable...The expected result of soil testing was to document elevated soil phosphorus levels in the original location of the horse slaughter.” **Archeological Survey at Washita Battlefield, 2002**

Use a dictionary to help identify the following terms:

- Calcium \_\_\_\_\_
- Phosphorus \_\_\_\_\_